

# Writing Growth Stages

based on Holistic Six Trait Assessment for Beginning Writers

## Stage 1: Readiness

The student:

- scribbles
- notices print in the environment
- shows interest in writing tools
- likes to make marks on paper
- begins to recognize the power of print
- likes listening to stories, poems, etc.
- begins connecting writing/pictures with self-expression
- likes expressing himself/herself orally

## Stage 2: Drawing and Exploring

The student:

- draws pictures with recognizable shapes
- captures more feeling in art through motion, color, facial expressions
- may dictate or record stories to accompany pictures
- begins labeling and using titles
- plays with words and letters
- often orients letters correctly
- associates more letters than before with sounds
- writes letter strings
- feels confident to "write by myself"
- enjoys writing
- adds details that might have been overlooked earlier
- uses words or pictures to express personal feelings

## Stage 3: Confident Experimentation

The student:

- feels more confident imitating environmental print
- writes more
- experiments with letters and rudimentary words
- shows greater attention to detail in letters and prephonetic words
- attempts longer expressions (two or more words)
- shows more awareness of conventions of print: spaces between words, spaces between lines, use of capital letters, up-down orientation, left-right orientation, use of punctuation
- begins using some capital letters, which may be randomly placed or used on words of personal importance
- begins to experiment with punctuation, though not necessarily appropriately placed

## Stage 4: Moving Toward Independence

The student:

- becomes a keen observer of environmental print
- feels increasing confidence copying and using environmental print
- enjoys writing words, phrases, and short sentences on his or her own
- expands oral stories
- enjoys drawing pictures, then creating accompanying text
- writes longer, more expansive text or uses picture in a series
- asks more questions about writing
- asks questions about conventions
- includes more conventions of writing in own text, including periods, question marks, commas, quotation marks, capital letters - which may or may not be appropriately placed
- likes to share - may ask others to read text

## Stage 5: Expanding and Adding Detail

The student:

- writes more - multiple sentences up to a paragraph or more
- experiments with different forms: lists, recipes, how-to papers, all-about reports, stories, poems, descriptions, journals, notes
- begins using some conventions (spaces between words, capitals, periods, title at the top) with growing consistency
- shows increasing understanding of what a sentence is
- adds more detail to both pictures and text
- expresses both ideas and feelings purposefully and forcefully through pictures and text
- shows increasing confidence experimenting with inventive spelling - especially if encouraged
- aims for correct spelling, and uses environment as a resource
- shows expanding vocabulary - especially if inventive spelling is encouraged
- increasingly uses writer's vocabulary to ask questions or discuss own writing - especially if traits are taught

## The Developmental Stages of Writing

based on Richard Gentry's work

Writing is a process that develops gradually; with exploration and experimentation, children will acquire the diverse skills. Children may exhibit more than one stage in a single piece of writing because it is a process and stages are connected and will overlap. As they gain more experience with reading, too, the writing growth will accelerate. Reading and writing development go hand-in-hand.

**Scribbling.** Scribbling looks like random assortment of marks on a child's paper. Sometimes the marks are large, circular, and random, and resemble drawing. Although the marks do not resemble print, they are significant

because the young writer uses them to show ideas.

**Letter-like Symbols.** Letter-like forms emerge, sometimes randomly placed, and are interspersed with numbers. The children can tell about their own drawings or writings. In this stage, spacing is rarely present.

**Strings of Letters.** In the strings-of-letters phase, students write some legible letters that tell us they know more about writing. Students are developing awareness of the sound-to-symbol relationship, although they are not matching most sounds. Students usually write in capital letters and have not yet begun spacing.

**Beginning Sounds Emerge.** At this stage, students begin to see the differences between a letter and a word, but they may not use spacing between words. Their message makes sense and matches the picture, especially when they choose the topic.

**Consonants Represent Words.** Students begin to leave spaces between their words and may often mix upper- and lowercase letters in their writing. They begin using punctuation and usually write sentences that tell ideas.

**Initial, Middle, and Final Sounds.** Students in this phase may spell correctly some sight words, siblings' names, and environmental print, but other words are spelled the way they sounds. Children easily hear sounds in words, and their writing is very readable.

**Transitional Phases.** This writing is readable and approaches conventional spelling. The students' writing is interspersed with words that are in standard form and have standard letter patterns.

**Standard Spelling.** Students in this phase can spell most words correctly and are developing an understanding of root words, compound words, and contractions. This understanding helps students spell similar words.